

**Case 3328*****Didelphis* Linnaeus, 1758 (Mammalia, DIDELPHIDAE): proposed correction of gender, and *Cryptotis* Pomel, 1848 (Mammalia, SORICIDAE): proposed fixation of gender**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this application, under Article 80.9 of the Code, is to emend the entry on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology to correct the gender of the nominal genus *Didelphis* Linnaeus, 1758 from masculine to feminine, as originally used by Linnaeus. It is proposed that the gender of the nominal genus *Cryptotis* Pomel, 1848 is fixed as masculine.

**Keywords.** Nomenclature; taxonomy; Soricomorpha; DIDELPHIDAE; SORICIDAE; *Didelphis*; *Cryptotis*; mammals.

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**Gender of the genus-group name *Didelphis*:**

1. Linnaeus (1758, pp. 54–55) established the nominal genus *Didelphis* and included five species: *marsupialis*, *philander*, *opossum*, *murina* and *dorsigera*. These species-group names are currently used as follows: *Didelphis marsupialis*, *Caluromys philander*, *Philander opossum* and *Marmosa murina*. *Didelphis dorsigera* is a synonym of *Marmosa murina*. No gender was given when *Didelphis* was placed on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology (Opinion 91, ICZN, 1926), but subsequently its gender was given as masculine in the first comprehensive Official List of Generic Names in Zoology (ICZN, 1958). It may be suggested that when the latter list was prepared, the gender was based on that of the Greek word *delphis*, which is masculine. Linnaeus (1758) clearly intended *Didelphis* to be feminine, however, which gave rise to the commonly used variant spelling *Didelphys* (e.g. Schreber, 1777; Wied-Neuwied, 1826; Wagner, 1843; Burmeister, 1854; Thomas, 1888). These and other authors presumably used the incorrect subsequent spelling *Didelphys* because it unambiguously expresses Linnaeus's meaning of *Didelphis* as 'two wombs' (an allusion to an internal womb and the external marsupium; obviously feminine), not 'two Delphi' (masculine), or 'two dolphins' (masculine). Mondolfi & Pérez-Hernández (1984) described *Didelphis albiventris imperfectus* as masculine, because *Didelphis* is identified as masculine on the Official List (ICZN, 1958, 1987). Most authors today follow Gardner (1993) in writing the name in the feminine form, *imperfecta* (e.g. Voss & Emmons, 1996; Lemos & Cerqueira, 2002). It is therefore proposed that the entry on the Official List is emended to record that the gender of *Didelphis* Linnaeus, 1758 is feminine.

**Gender of the genus-group name *Cryptotis*:**

2. Pomel (1848, p. 249) established *Cryptotis* as a subgenus of *Musaraneus* Brisson, 1756, with '*M[usaraneus]. cinereus* (sorex *cinereus* Bachm[an])' as the only included species. *Sorex cinereus* Bachman, 1837 (p. 373) is a junior homonym of *Sorex arcticus cinereus* Kerr, 1792 (p. 206) (currently *Sorex cinereus*) and junior synonym of *Sorex parvus* Say in James, 1823 (p. 163, footnote) (currently *Cryptotis parvus*). Trouessart (1879, p. 262) listed *Cryptotis* as a synonym of *Blarina* Gray, 1838 (p. 124). Merriam (1895, p. 16) used *Cryptotis* as a subgenus of *Blarina* Gray, 1838, and treated *Sorex cinereus* Bachman, 1837, as a synonym of *Sorex parvus* Say, 1823 which he used in the combination *Blarina parva*. Miller (1911, p. 221) elevated *Cryptotis* to full generic rank, described *C. gracilis*, *C. frontalis* and *C. pergracilis macer* as new and also used *Cryptotis* for the following nominal species: *C. mexicana*, *C. mexicana peregrina*, *C. nelsoni*, *C. nigrescens*, *C. orophila*, *C. soricina* and *C. tropicalis*. All of these names were originally described in the nominal genus *Blarina* with no change of gender. Subsequently, many authors (e.g. Miller, 1912; Goldman, 1920; Goodwin, 1954a, 1954b) were equally inconsistent in their treatment of the gender of *Cryptotis*. Miller & Kellogg (1955, pp. 38–43) were the first to treat all *Cryptotis* name combinations as feminine. Cabrera (1958, pp. 46–48), however, consistently treated the name *Cryptotis* as masculine.

3. Woodman (1993) addressed the issue of gender and concluded that the name *Cryptotis* is feminine. Although he should have considered Article 30(a)(i) of the then current edition of the Code, Woodman's (1993, p. 545) argument hinged on his claim that 'Greek noun formation dictates that names ending in *-otis* are feminine' and the assumption that *Cryptotis* refers to a hidden eared-creature. He also concluded that all generic names of mammals ending in *-otis* should be treated as feminine, apparently unaware that *Myotis* is on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology as masculine. Woodman has continued to treat *Cryptotis* as feminine (e.g. Woodman, 1996, 2003; Woodman & Timm, 1992, 1993; Woodman, Cuartas & Delgado, 2003).

4. Pritchard (1994, p. 549), commenting on Woodman's (1993) assertion that *Cryptotis* is feminine, stated that the *-otis* ending was a derived form of *otos*, the genitive of *ous* (the neuter word for ear), and not derived from the Greek *otis*, a feminine word, meaning bustard (Aves) and, as Prichard commented, an inappropriate derivation for a genus of mammal. Prichard (1994) interpreted the name *Cryptotis* to be a combination of adjectives meaning hidden-eared, rather than hidden ear, and certainly not hidden bustard (or hidden, eared creature). To stabilize usage it is proposed that the gender of the genus-group name *Cryptotis* is confirmed by the Commission to be masculine. Further discussion and examples of genus-group names ending in either *-otis* or *-otus* is provided in a Nomenclatural Note on pp. 183–184.

5. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature accordingly is asked:

- (1) to use its plenary power to emend the entry on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology for *Didelphis* Linnaeus, 1758 to record that the gender is corrected from masculine to feminine;
- (2) to rule that the gender of the name *Cryptotis* Pomel, 1848 is masculine;
- (3) to place the name *Cryptotis* Pomel, 1848 (gender: masculine), type species by monotypy *Sorex cinereus* Bachman, 1837, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology.

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